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Social Action in the Local Church

• by Alfred Schmalz

Social action is the responsibility of the local church—in all the towns and cities across the land. The charter by which the Council for Social Action came into being expresses this clearly: "to help the churches to make the Christian Gospel more effective in society." The churches are not unloading the job of social action upon a denominational agency. They have created the Council for Social Action to help them meet their own problems more intelligently and more adequately.

How, now, can we work out this problem together?

First, we must have our eyes opened to the realities of our community life. An important part of the task of the Council, working with Social Action Committees in the churches and with individual ministers and laymen, is to *show America to the churches*.

We would show the people both the dream that is America and the distress that surrounds us. America is essentially a dream—of abundance to be released in order to satisfy the need of all men for food, shelter and clothing, of justice for men of all races and beliefs, of brotherhood, freedom and peace. We have sung of those "alabaster cities . . . undimmed by human tears." That is America! The iron in our hills, the great fertile expanse of our prairies, the immense stretches of untouched timber—all this to be harnessed by men of strength and faith for the building of a kingdom. This is the American dream!

We would make that dream live again in the hearts of our people. But at the same time we must show to how large an extent it has been lost. America today is not the land of opportunity, abundance, freedom, brotherhood of which the founders dreamed. It is reported that 24,000,000 people are

living on relief money; that 50,000,000 persons dwell in slum like abodes on farms, in towns and cities; that great number of our people—the eight and a half million Negro and white cotton sharecroppers, for example—are thoroughly depressed to abject poverty; that one half of America tries to live on less than \$1,500 annual income per family; that freedom of speech and assembly is denied to minority groups, with vigilantism on the increase; that Negroes and other racial groups suffer unequal treatment before the law, and at the hands of their fellows. All is certainly not well in America!

This we must see. And then we must be brought to a new sense of responsibility in the matter. These evil conditions could not exist if we actually made our protest and joined hands with others who are seeking to re-adjust our economic and political life.

"Oh, what can I do?" is the complaint of many an individual who sees that something must be done, but knows not how. Sometimes that remark is an excuse for remaining on the sidelines, a spectator. All we ask is that as individuals we move into the arena of the social struggle, uniting with others who are already there. In many small acts the new society is born. Let us do simply what we can.

It is our doing nothing—giving no money to organizations which are working for peace and justice, reading no magazines and books which discuss social change, joining no agency for specific reforms—partaking in no struggle for righteousness—which renders us helpless. If all the people who feel their helplessness as individuals would "join up" with their fellows, we could build a public opinion mighty enough to move heaven and earth. H. G. Wells tells in a story how people had agreed on a certain day and hour to raise their voices in a mighty chorus of shouting, with the hope that the dwellers on Mars might hear. The time came. But secretly each man had decided not to shout but to listen. The time passed. None had shouted. Must we stay helpless like that?

Take but a single issue—the teachers loyalty oaths. How upine the public is. A minority group of hysterical persons who see a communist under every bed has imposed upon teachers in 21 states a fascist law which may easily suppress freedom of discussion in the classrooms of our schools. But what do we do? We read our papers, go to our desks, eat our meals—and let the issue be decided by those who would turn American teachers into yes-men for an economic and political order too full of evils and human suffering to permit any self-respecting Christian to remain silent.

Obviously our effectiveness is dependent upon organization. We must discover ways of getting together. Individuals who feel the burden of the world's cross and the pain of their fellow-men must join hands with one another. That is why, for our churches, we recommend the formation of Social Action Committees.

These committees in several thousand Congregational and Christian churches would be the nucleus for the formation of study groups and for the enlistment of people in support of particular community activities. Composed of persons who are genuinely concerned with what is happening today to people, and whom the rank and file of church members look to with confidence, these Committees would lead their churches and their fellow-members into an earnest facing of community problems. We look to these Committees for that cooperation which will help to attain the end for which the churches organized the Council for Social Action.

Tasks of Local Committees

Let us now be more specific. What are some of the concrete tasks of such a Committee?

The Social Action Committee should engage in the following types of activity, and in many others such as are suggested, for example, in *Churches in Social Action: Why and How*—

a 32-page pamphlet, which may be obtained from the Council for 10c.

1. *Know your community.* Members of the Committee should be charged with the responsibility of making reports on certain phases of the community's life, with a view to making the Committee, and through it the church, familiar with the facts immediately at hand. Thus, one person might discover how many families are on relief, what relief payments are made per family, how the children are getting along. Another person might discover what the housing conditions are, what kind of dwellings poor people live in, the scale of rents, the effect of slum neighborhoods on juvenile delinquency, infant mortality and disease. Another person might discover facts about industrial conditions, hours of work, level of wages, the extent and nature of labor organization. Another person might discover facts about farming conditions, the extent of farm tenancy, level of income, the spread of the cooperative movement.

This cannot be done all at once. But gradually the Committee should form a more or less complete picture of the social conditions in the community in which the church is carrying on its spiritual ministry. No church can function adequately until its membership knows how other people live. This is the purpose of such investigations. Most of us simply are not acquainted with the actual conditions in our own communities.

2. *Form study classes.* From time to time the Committee should call the people of the church together for the study of particular problems. In some churches this can be done through already existent organizations, such as the Men's Club, the Woman's Association, the Young People's Society. No new organization should be set up unless necessary. Some churches have periods in the fall and winter season set aside for "The Church at School," when varied problems are studied.

in such churches the consideration of pressing social issues may come in best at that point.

Study classes should be set up for a definite period, then disbanded; otherwise interest is lost through too many meetings. They should not eventuate simply in new knowledge, but should be directed toward action. Some definite project should be started as a consequence of the thinking that has been done—in the case of national issues, for example, letters to Congress, contributions to agencies in a particular field of interest, protest to responsible authorities.

The Social Action Committee should use all the resources of the Council in planning and carrying through its program. For instance, the Council has made available study packets on such issues as Neutrality, Child Labor, Women in Industry, Liquor Control, Military Training in Schools and Colleges, Civil Liberties, Social Security. Its semi-monthly magazine *Social Action* (\$1.00 per year) carries suggestions about programs. The Council is prepared to suggest bibliographies on all social issues.

3. *Keep a Literature Table and Bulletin Board.* Some churches carry an item in their budgets for literature; this is an excellent way to help the church membership keep informed. Leaflets, pamphlets, magazines, books should be kept on display, with a person in charge at those times when people may be present. In addition, the Social Action Committee should keep a bulletin board, tacking up notices about important meetings and events, news items, cartoons, posters. It is desirable to change the material on the literature table and bulletin board every few weeks, in order to maintain the interest of the church.

4. *Organize for Action.* The Committee's name has the word "action" in it. What kind of action is intended? How will such action implicate or commit the church itself?

There are some things which the church can do *as a church*.

There are other things which, because it is an institution whose membership is apt to be in disagreement over many social issues, it cannot do as a church. This must be borne in mind.

When a person joins a church, he does not commit himself to certain prescribed opinions about social problems, but submits himself to obedience to his Christian conscience. The conscience does not speak alike to all. Nor is the conscience of all as sensitive and alert as the conscience of some. In fairness we must recognize the existence of different opinions in equally conscientious people in a single church. Thus, in any truly controversial social issue, in which a specific solution of a problem is at stake, there usually is no single "voice of the church." There is only the voice of particular groups of church members.

A Social Action Committee, or any other group within the church which may have a single mind on some problem, should not commit the local church as a whole to specific social change beyond the general consent of its varied membership. This is not to say that such a group should be silent or inactive. At times there will indeed be a united "voice of the church," and then without hesitation a representative and trusted group should speak for the whole church. At other times when there is no general agreement to the specific action suggested, a minority group within the church membership should nevertheless act in line with its own convictions. In such cases it should be made plain that this is not the whole church in action but a particular group of church members.

It will not always be easy to make this distinction—and each church will have to work out its own policy in the matter—but the distinction is important in view of the present institutional character of the church visible. To see a strong minority group or even a large majority group balanced enough to respect differences in opinion in others will often be the best example to the total membership of the practical meaning of Christ's gospel for the world.

Tasks of the Churches

But let us now speak positively and affirmatively of what the church as a church can and must do.

1. *The church by renewing our self-dedication to the righteous God as revealed by Christ should lead us really to want the Kingdom of God.* There are many in the Christian church who look at life primarily as businessmen or politicians or patriots. When men assert that they want to be Christians, it is certainly the plain duty of the Church to place obedience to God's will before such men as their first allegiance.

2. *The church should state the general outline of a Christian society.* It must say without compromise that the service motive alone is Christian. In a choice between profits and principles, principles must come first if we dare to call our choice Christian. It follows, in order to make the development of Christian personality possible, that all men must have adequate economic security. Inevitably this means that wealth, power and opportunity must be more equitably distributed. We must not forget that the resources for the physical base of the abundant life are far greater than most people realize and can be increased by effective production and distribution.

3. *The church must call people to repentance for specific social evils: violations of liberty, violence against workers' organizations, piling up of armaments, lynchings, slums, low wages, war.*

4. *Where the issue is simple and clear, the church should take its stand with definiteness: for instance, in support of social insurance, adequate relief, the abolition of child labor, the right of workers to organize for collective bargaining, the maintenance of high standards of living.*

Such is the technique and strategy of social action in the churches. So can we fulfill God's hope and dream for a world characterized by justice and freedom, peace and brotherhood.

A Church School Builds A Christian Community • by Margueritte Br

This Christian Commonwealth is not only *for* but also *by* the intermediate group of junior high school students who are so likely to be indifferent to the traditional program of religious education. In an endeavor to discover what Christian citizenship entails in the complex civilization of which they are a part, they have formed themselves into a "state." They have their state officials: a governor, who is a young adult capable of taking hold when the affairs of government become too strenuous for teenage discretion, a lieutenant-governor who is one of the high school boys and conducts most of the state business, a postmaster-general who looks after the post office, the sale of stamps, and the delivery of the statements which the church sends out each month; a secretary of state who records and cares for new citizens; and a recording-secretary who compiles the state history and records.

One Sunday each month the group holds their state meeting. The other three Sundays they meet in discussion groups taking up such subjects as ideal commonwealths, the prophets' contribution to the growth of a Christian state, the principles of Jesus in relationship to a Christian state, and such other topics as they feel need of in the development of a fuller understanding of their project.

When the state meeting and the class discussions are over, the group meets as a church. By merely turning their chairs so that they face the huge stained-glass window below which stands a platform with altar, they transform the entire atmosphere and purpose of their meeting. A sense of worship made actual, there is quiet and an expectant attitude of re-

ence. The service which they have worked out tends to be dualistic in accord with adolescent delight in meaningful ceremony. The clergy and choir are robed and they march down the aisle behind banners and swinging censer. The lighting of the candles is accompanied by complete silence. The younger clergy, who are students, read the scripture and lead in the prayers. A young adult, who is a seminary student, delivers the short, pictorial sermons. At the close of the service the audience stands while the choir and clergy with their regalia march out. The entire service is spontaneous for the usual, being of their own devising, quite obviously has content.

But the Sunday meetings are not the only concern of the Christian Commonwealth. These young citizens early discovered what some experts have not yet discovered—that religious education to be meaningful requires more than one short hour on Sunday morning. These citizens meet also as guilds.

Each student when he becomes a citizen chooses the guild which he will belong. Most of the guilds meet on Wednesday afternoon, occasionally for some special reason of leadership or convenience a guild has a special time of meeting. The Artists' Guild has made the posters and pennants for all the guilds, drawn and printed the stamps, made the linoleum block cover for their service programs, designed and embroidered the altar cloth, helped with scenery and costumes for pageants and otherwise made itself indispensable to the aesthetic life of the state. The Players Guild of fifteen members presents the programs built around the three great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Trinity. The Musicians' Guild furnishes the choir, the Artisans' Guild helps with lights, scenery, builds the post office, and acts as general utility agent. The Clergy Guild plans the church services and helps to conduct them. The Journalists' Guild edits the newspaper, which is so alive and spontaneous as to furnish a worthy model for older journals. It was from the newspaper that one of the crucial problems

of state arose. The newspaper made money. Whose money should it be? "Who gets the profits?"—the guild? The state? The individuals? The church? There were spirited arguments for each claim. The profit motive was laid bare and debated from all possible angles. Held up against the motto of the Christian Commonwealth, "All for each, each for all" it had to stand or fall on its merits. The question was brought to trial and after due deliberation the jury voted fifty per cent of the profits to the state and fifty per cent to the guild.

Being a guild member is no static affair. A student enters the guild as an apprentice, works his way toward journeyman and may finally become a master craftsman. When he earns the master-craftsman status he is publicly recognized by the state and his certificate of citizenship is stamped by the state seal.

The project, if one may call a Christian Commonwealth *that* so factual a name, is not a finished accomplishment, but a growing attempt to make Christian citizenship real in terms of the child's actual experience. The groups make mistakes, sometimes due to adult planning and sometimes due to adolescent exuberance. But they profit by their mistakes and steer a steady course toward their goal of genuine understanding and cooperation. Their social action is born of a need in their own young lives to feel themselves a part of the problems of their world and, like all social action deserving of the name, it necessitates their best thought and effort for its realization.

The church school which sponsors this "Christian Commonwealth" is part of United Church, Hyde Park, Chicago, Ill., Douglas Horton, Minister.

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"Therefore, let every citizen who has the cause of honor and peace at heart take this stand: *Our trade as a neutral must stand at the risk of the traders; our army and navy must not be used to protect this trade. It is a choice of profits or peace. Our country must remain at peace.*"

—Admiral William S. Sims, Commander of the U. S. Fleet in European waters during the World War.

A Group Of Women Build Racial Goodwill

When individuals or social groups are separated by prejudices and misunderstanding, their differences tend to disappear if they engage in some common enterprise quite removed from the immediate sources of friction. It is upon this psychological basis—of which use is made too seldom in social relations—that a project in better racial attitudes has been carried out in a New England city during the past year. The returns have been so richly rewarding to the participants that the project is here outlined in spite of the dangers that lie in publicity. It is the type of enterprise which must be carried on in very small groups and without parade.

A start was made when twelve women, six white and six colored, prepared and ate together an evening meal at the home of one of the number. The evening was then spent in the discussion of international relations. The "color" problem was taboo as a topic of conversation. Naturally, since the intimate social contact was new to most of the group, there was some feeling of restraint at the start. Before long, however, as they talked together as women with common problems, all racial barriers faded away. It was surprising to most of the group to discover that the differences between them were small, and easily forgotten.

The initial group formed the nucleus of other groups, so that now there are ten of them—each composed of about ten members. They meet once or twice a month and are studying International Relations, Stewardship, Bible courses, Christian Ethics, and other matters. Any vital subject, except the immediate racial problem, is proper.

All the "white" women who have been privileged to participate in these groups testify that their feeling toward their "colored" sisters has been radically changed and that their inherited prejudices have disappeared.

A State Committee Educates For Peace

• by Mrs. Erlon M. Richardson

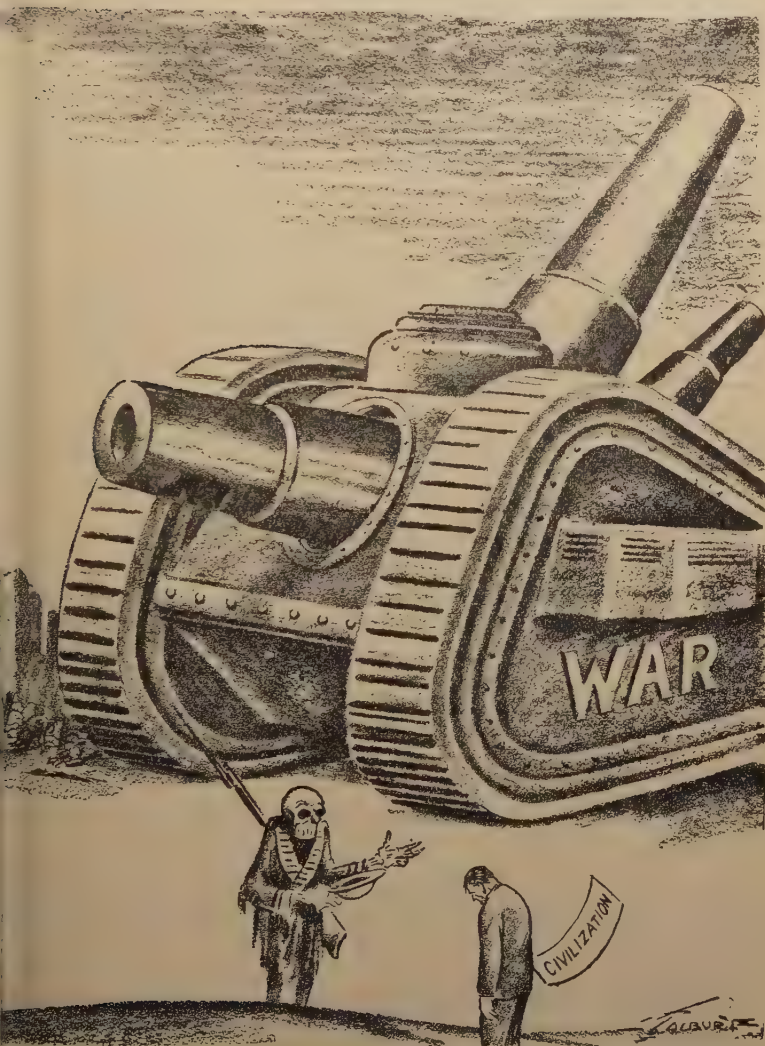
Peace Education must be undertaken with three things in mind.

First, there must be adequate program material. Our Council assisted in an intensive campaign in preparation for the Peace Plebiscite, distributing leaflets prepared by the CSA and urging the study of the recommended pamphlets. We followed this through by distributing 150 copies of "America's First Peace Plebiscite," with the request that a comprehensive report be given to all church organizations. In January we sent out the CSA material on "Neutrality, A Study Guide," and recommended the Neutrality packet for discussion groups. We shall distribute 300 copies of the CSA bulletin "Women and Peace." Our new catalog lists many of the best books on war and peace. Systematic reading of *Social Action* counts as one book in our Reading Contest.

Secondly, we must devise ways of helping the local church to use the material available. For the small church we recommend that one evening each week be set aside for group study; this group to prepare one program each month for the regular meeting of the Ladies' Aid. In the rural church, whose members can get together only infrequently, the Missionary Council's "key woman" is requested to give each member some literature to be read at home, with the understanding that at the regular monthly meeting twenty minutes will be allowed for discussion of this material. For the large church we recommend the formation of "interest groups."

Thirdly, we must secure the participation of all churches in special activities. Many women's groups report that they have put on peace programs. Occasionally a Young People's

"Your Carriage Awaits, My Lord."



Courtesy: New York World-Telegram

Society reports the presentation of a peace play. Many of the pastors are leading discussions on Neutrality and the ROTC. Some Men's Clubs have speakers on international relations. One church put on a World Interdependence Exhibit which had great educational value.



A Layman's Conference Offers Its Findings

On invitation of the Grinnell Men's Club a conference of laymen from Iowa was held November 10, 1935. The following is a report on findings.

The general subject under consideration by the Conference is "The Function of the Church in the Modern World." It is clear, from the discussions to which the Conference has listened, that there is not entire agreement among its members either as to the present condition of the Church or as to the problems it must meet. It is our belief, however, that a majority of the Conference subscribe to the following brief statements:

First, that the Church today faces a very serious, indeed, critical situation; that it has lost the support of great numbers of people and has not functioned adequately in meeting the needs and problems of life in the world of today; that this situation should be faced frankly and courageously by laymen and ministers alike, in order that the way may be found to give effective expression to the spirit and religion of Jesus in this complex civilization of the modern world.

Second, that the Church has an interest in every problem, whatever its nature, that involves human relations.

Third, that the teachings of Jesus are dynamic and therefore the Church should teach and preach a positive, affirming religion.

Fourth, that a vital need of the Church today is a sense of conviction of the reality of God—of a driving, compelling faith.

Fifth, that the church must take a clear, unequivocal stand against race prejudices and conflicts, social and economic injustices, and the institution of war. It must work affirmatively for the building of a more friendly world and for the establishment and maintenance of institutions of peace.

Sixth, that the Church should exert itself to the utmost to train Christian leaders. The spirit of Jesus is essential for the satisfactory solution of the world's complex social and economic problems.

Seventh, that the members of every church in our denomination should study the organization and proposals of the Council for Social Action, and cooperate with it, and help guide it in its work.



Church And Cooperative—Friends

• by Galen Russell

Our Consumers Club and our Credit Union are organized on a community basis. They have no official connection with the church. The Consumers Club is operating on true Rochdale principles. The Club does the buying for its members and refunds the savings as patronage dividends at the end of each quarter. I would not want these cooperatives to be officially connected with the church. I believe they should be non-sectarian in their emphasis and outreach. Yet I believe that each of these organizations has been inspired by Christian idealism.

We began our Consumers Club two years ago with nine families. During the first eighteen months it grew slowly. During the last six months membership in the Club has increased about 100 per cent. About 20 per cent of the local membership is also counted among our church membership. The Club has now spread to the neighboring towns and we

will soon be large enough to employ a salaried executive. We will hold the next annual meeting in our church and Reverend James Myers of the Federal Council of Churches will be our principal speaker.

I would like to see the Cooperative grow slowly. I have in mind the local merchants operating their private stores. They too have their difficulties. They are caught in this "collapse of profit-motivated industry." As the Consumers Club gradually takes over commodities on the "buying for use" basis instead of the "profit basis" the local merchant will have time to extricate himself from his private profit business, if he so desires.

There are three important by-products of these two cooperative societies. First, they have developed initiative among men and women in the lower middle class. Instead of giving up in the struggle to live, they now have hope. They are glad of this means of helping themselves. Secondly, the members are informing themselves about quality goods. This education inevitably leads them to study the production end of the articles they use. They welcome the power that the club gives them to insist that the club's purchases shall be produced under good labor conditions. And lastly, the most active members are discovering what the motto, "share with us," means in terms of practical everyday living. They are learning to cooperate with each other.



A City Re-Thinks Its Civic Life

• by Charles Gilkey

The movement that has come to be known as "Re-Thinking Chicago" is an adventure of the churches and synagogues to write citizenship once again into the "conscience platform" of Chicago citizens. It was born two years ago in the minds and hearts of a small group of Christian ministers and laymen.

no believed that, if we could only establish contact between the known facts about the city's life and problems, as they are piled high on the shelves and in the pages of all our social science researches, and the mind and conscience of its citizens who are related to the Protestant and Catholic churches and the Jewish temples of the city, we might yet "start something" before the cause of democracy is finally and hopelessly lost in this metropolis of the Central West. A little group of social scientists on the one hand, and ministers of religion on the other, set their hands and hearts to this common task.

In these two years we have done—or rather begun to do—three things that seem to us important. We have begun to make accessible to the average citizen a literature of important facts about his city that as a rule he does not know; and we have got these facts into the hands of the ministers of the city as trustworthy material for use in stirring its intelligence and conscience. That literature is inexpensively available by mail from the secretary, Mr. Shirley Greene, 5757 University Avenue, Chicago.

Second, in a series of downtown conferences between experts in these civic problems and ministers and citizens who are ready to study them in more detail, we have become more and more convinced that the ultimate solution of the problems of good government in a great city depends upon those very changes in our social order for which we hope and pray and teach.

But third, and most important, we think we see more clearly than ever that this interdependent end, better government through social reconstruction and social reconstruction through better government, can never be attained simply through enlightening and converting the already converted and informed through a parlor conference in the Loop. We must get back to our local communities and neighborhoods, and into the churches where some, at least, of their civic intelligence and conscience is accessible, and stimulate there the sluggish func-

tioning of our civic life. So we have been busy this last year in stimulating and cooperating with local communities in the holding of such conferences on citizenship.

And our experience has convinced us more than ever of the urgency of this task. Not only are our citizens ignorant and indifferent about the processes and forces by which now they are governed; but there is a huge cold mass of inertia, discouragement and defeatism, which must be broken up and overcome before Chicago's present lamentable civic and political state can ever be bettered. Merely to get up enthusiasm for some new plan like that of a city manager or a new charter we think will not solve our problem. Some of us are convinced that until we can stimulate a new intelligence and conscience, not only within individuals but within our local communities, no change of plan or method of government will profit us very much.

So we have started in to build below the surface, on lines that will keep us and our successors busy for long years to come. The channels of local self-government, long clogged with corruption until many of them no longer function at all, must be cleaned out by local initiative and responsibility. And at the same time, the fires of faith in democracy—the ancient American faith—kindled best, some of us believe, by religious faith in man and in God—must be shaken down and refueled. In those wide areas, many of them within the church, where the democratic faith has burned very low among us. Have you not found that to be true in other communities besides Chicago?

There are those who foresee in the not distant future serious and perhaps costly conflicts between church and state. It may indeed yet come to that, if faith in democracy goes on disintegrating, and tendencies toward an American fascism go on multiplying among us. But is there not still time to avoid that tragic dilemma between civic and religious loyalty, if we begin in time to put religious devotion into civic duty?

—Reprinted from *Seminary Register*

Churches Act To Support Conscience

At a meeting of the New England Social Action Committee, in the fall of 1934, it was reported that Kenneth Arnold, member of the Congregational Church in Central Falls, Rhode Island, and a student of the Class of 1936 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had been required to forfeit his right to a degree from the Institute on account of his conscientious objections to compulsory military training. The matter was brought to the attention of the Committee by Rev. Albert Shenberg, chairman of the Social Action Committee of the Rhode Island Conference.

Up until that time there were few persons who knew of the case, although it was a full year since Kenneth Arnold had accepted the penalty imposed upon him by the Institute. Arnold had entered M.I.T. in 1932. At that time he was not a conscientious objector. Willingly, and without any feeling that he was violating Christian principles, he enrolled as a freshman in the military band. In his sophomore year he enrolled in the regular military course. But about that time he began to feel a tension in conscience. He discussed the problem with friends—students and faculty members. Finally, when his mind was clear, he requested a conference with President Karl T. Compton. Dr. Compton advised him that according to a ruling of the Executive Committee of M.I.T., enacted in 1929, the president must either expel a student who refuses to fulfill the military science requirements or may excuse him on the understanding that he at once becomes a special student ineligible for a degree. Arnold felt that for him it was a choice between Christianity and the ROTC. Dr. Compton recognized the sincerity of his position, and exercised the discretion granted the president by permitting Arnold to remain in the Institute as a special student. Arnold accepted the penalty.

That spring (1934) the Rhode Island Conference had adopted a resolution, with no specific reference, pledging the wholehearted support of the Conference "to any student member of the Congregational-Christian Church, who refuses to participate, against the dictates of his conscience, in such compulsory military training." Arnold learned of this resolution. So when, in the summer, he chanced to meet Mr. Sherberg at the Wellesley Institute of International Relations, he let it be known that he was willing to have the churches give him what support was possible.

This was the status of the matter when it was brought to the attention of the New England Committee in the fall.

At once a sub-committee was organized to deal with the problem. It consists of James D. Dingwell, pastor of Arnold's home church, Carl Heath Kopf, pastor of Mount Vernon Church, Boston, of which Arnold is a student member, and Alfred Schmalz, then pastor of Plymouth Church, Belmont, Massachusetts, now on the staff of the Council for Social Action. These ministers brought Arnold before the whole New England Committee for questioning. They also interviewed him privately.

Subsequently they arranged for a conference with President Compton, at which they learned the Institute's position at first-hand and when they made their request for full exemption for Kenneth Arnold. A short time afterward they sent a memorandum to Dr. Compton, which was presented to the Executive Committee. These ministers also communicated with the members of the Executive Committee, with Dr. Compton's consent, trying to arrange interviews. These interviews were not, however, granted, the Executive Committee preferring to have the case handled solely through the president.

Correspondence with President Compton indicates that on several occasions during 1934 and 1935 the Executive Com-

Committee had this request for full exemption under consideration. For a time it seemed that alternative language courses might be offered the conscientious objector in lieu of military science. But this hope did not materialize, and finally on January 9, 1936, Dr. Compton wrote that "it was the unanimous opinion of the (Executive) Committee that our present regulations in this matter should continue."

This decision did not end the matter for these churchmen. As early as October 25, 1935 they had laid the ground for a campaign of a different nature, when they wrote President Compton, "If we as a committee are unable in this quiet way to persuade the Executive Committee to offer Kenneth Arnold complete exemption, we see no other course open to us than to press the matter through our churches."

As a beginning in this new approach, two Boston ministers who had not been connected with the case before—Robert Wood Coe and Boynton Merrill—met with the sub-committee and Kenneth Arnold. They prepared a petition which was later circulated among a small group of ministers and lay people of our denomination. To it are attached 63 signatures. At the present writing this petition is before the Institute for consideration.

It is hoped that the request will now be granted. But if not, it may be necessary to carry the case before all our churches for study and action.

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"The higher schools in Treuenbrietzen, Prussia and other German cities have replaced regular morning prayers with a Nazi ritual. The Nordic pagan magazine *Nordland* asserts, 'The Sermon on the Mount was the first Bolshevist manifesto in a language now buried under the dust of centuries'."

—*New York Times*

A Church In Action

• by Katharine Terrie

"FERA educator would have us study Russia." So ran the headline in the Bangor *Daily News* on January 15, 1935. The article began as follows:

"Addressing his classes in the Bangor Y.M.C.A. last night, Vernon Booker, FERA educator who is giving a series of lessons in the social and economic principles of Russian Communism quoted at great length from the opinion of Dr. Frankford E. Williams, psychiatrist, who believes that Russian home life has resulted in the raising of healthier, more normal children than does the home life of America. . . ."

This newspaper report had immediate consequences. Protests were made by the American Legion and the Rotary Club. A statement appeared by the chief justice of the Supreme Judicial Court. As a result, the superintendent of schools ordered the course discontinued, and the president of the Y.M.C.A. rescinded permission to use its rooms for the classes. By evening the governor of the state wired the Commander of the American Legion post, "Have ordered services of Booker discontinued immediately."

Then the Social Action Committee of the Brewer Congregational Church took a hand, for Vernon Booker was a resident of Brewer and a member of the parish. Following the January 20 morning service, the committee met with the pastor Basil C. Gleason, and agreed that the Booker case deserved attention. The result was that on January 22, at a meeting attended by all members of the Committee, the pastor and Mr. Booker also being present, it was unanimously voted to start by Mr. Booker and to take steps to see that he received justice. The Committee agreed to work quietly and without publicity as long as possible.

The first step was a letter to the governor. The Committee

pointed out that in terminating Mr. Booker's services as a teacher—

1. No careful investigation of the case had been made,
2. Mr. Booker had had no opportunity to defend himself,
3. Evidence would strongly indicate that the article in the *Bangor Daily News* of January 15 was a misrepresentation of fact.

The Committee had interviewed Mr. Booker. In response to the questioning, he had affirmed that he was not a communist, that he did not advocate communism, that his sources of information on the subject were available in public libraries, and that the subject was selected by vote of the class from a wide range of topics.

The Committee received no reply to this letter to the governor. Thereupon the chairman of the Social Action Committee and the pastor met with a selected group of individuals. Each person present agreed to communicate with the several officials involved and to persuade others in sympathy with Mr. Booker to do likewise. With the consent of the Committee the pastor presented the matter to the Sunday morning congregation on January 27, and urged those present and their friends to exert their influence.

Throughout the month of February the Committee carried on a persistent campaign, interesting people in the community, arranging interviews with the school authorities and the governor, and urging an investigation of the case. This patient, day-by-day effort bore fruit, for at length the supervising school committee granted a hearing. Mr. Booker and other witnesses were examined. Ten days later their unanimous decision to recommend the reinstatement of Mr. Booker was made public by the governor. It declared: "We find that Mr. Booker does not believe in or advocate atheism, easy divorce, free love or communism." However, the board added that it did not feel that "further employment of him under their jurisdiction would be advisable."

Immediately following this ruling the Committee individually interviewed the members of the Brewer School regarding the possibility of Mr. Booker teaching in Brewer under their authority. With their consent, Mr. Booker organized classes and taught until the end of the school year. In September he entered Union Theological Seminary to study for the ministry.

"We learned several things," the pastor reports in summing up this experience, "the value of persistence, the importance of always having plenty of reserve ammunition ready to use if necessary. Without exception the men on the Social Action Committee stood strong and steady during the whole experience. And the whole church stood solidly behind them."

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Ministers Organize For Civil Liberties

• by Walter Metcalf

The Social Gospel has had little influence in Tampa. The churches have played no part in civic affairs. One or two voices were raised against the pervasive corruption, but they were little heeded. Politicians, sure of the churches' weakness, would listen to sermons against corruption and vice, and then indicate their enjoyment of the joke by slapping the ministers on the back. Meanwhile, conditions in Tampa grew steadily worse.

Then something happened in Tampa. Six men were seized by regular police officers, without warrants. Three of them were taken from the steps of the City Hall, bundled into waiting automobiles, and flogged. One of the men, Joseph Shollmaker, died.

Similar floggings were not unknown in Tampa's past. But the floggers bungled this time, by attacking men who were well known. Some of them were regular attendants at our Sunday evening Forum. One of them had sat with us on the Local Federal Emergency Relief Council. We had invariably

voted with him on all questions of social security and redress.

It was our experiences on the Council, in fact, that had led to the formation of our Social Action Ministry. We had interviewed hundreds of individuals, and had plead their cause before the ministers and the public. We had organized religious services at the Transient Relief Camp, and had generally tried to represent the underprivileged. All but one of the men attacked were our friends.

The floggings and the murder sent us into action at once. We called together the cabinet of the Ministerial Association and the leading ministers of the city. This group met morning, noon, and night. The Workers Alliance of the unemployed was ready to act—a sympathy strike on PWA jobs on the day of Shoemaker's funeral, banners, parades, the possibility of real direct action.

The workers trusted the ministers, and our counsel of moderation was heeded. We asked the Mayor to call an hour of public mourning during the funeral. We called the people together for a great penitence service in the City Auditorium, voicing the pent-up feelings of the whole city. Station WDAE gave us an hour on the air, and we know that many thousands of listeners-in applauded with those in the Auditorium as we lead for penitence and justice.

The newspapers cooperated magnificently, giving the case wide publicity. Norman Thomas made a challenging speech to an overflow meeting in the Auditorium, under the auspices of the Committee for the Defense of Civil Liberties, of which I am chairman. The ministers of Tampa were not alone. The whole city was indignant, and almost every organization in Tampa passed scathing resolutions denouncing the crime.

It is the kind of struggle in which every conscientious believer in civil rights and social justice had to join. We are praying that Tampa will continue to demand justice, and that the Social Gospel in action will continue to lead it along the road of repentance, right, and truth.

A State Committee Defends Free Speech

Walter Baer, civil engineer of Portland, Oregon, for thirty years a resident of the United States, is now at Ellis Island awaiting deportation to Germany. What has he done to merit this drastic treatment?

Baer's efforts in behalf of adequate unemployment relief and unemployment insurance brought him to the attention of the immigration authorities. Besides being identified with the struggle for relief, Baer had advocated a sewage disposal system to which powerful interests in the state were opposed.

The immigration authorities started deportation proceedings on the ground that he had committed crimes (larceny and burglary) involving "moral turpitude" fifteen years ago when serving in the National Guard on the Mexican border. During the last fourteen years Baer has been a respected member of society. On coming out of prison he reformed, became an engineer in the Geodetic Survey, married an American girl (they have three children) and has lived an exemplary life. Now, after fourteen years, the Federal Government suddenly decides to deport him to Germany, a country which he hardly remembers, whose language is unfamiliar and to which he is an alien in every possible way.

The fact that the deportation proceedings were not instituted at the time Baer committed the alleged crimes, is proof in the minds of many that his activities in behalf of the unemployed and his conflict with special interests in the sewage disposal question have led to this attempt to deport him.

The widespread indignation which the deportation order has aroused on the part of leading citizens of Portland is an indication of the respect which Baer has gained in his own community. The best known newspapers, the Ministerial Association, the State Grange, the Central Labor Council—are working for the cancellation of the deportation order.

Congregationalists have also participated in this struggle. The Social Action Committee of the Oregon Conference, Re-

Raymond B. Walker of the First Congregational Church, Portland, and other Congregationalists are leading a vigorous and organized protest.

Last November, in appealing to the Governor, Charles H. Martin, for Walter Baer's pardon, the Oregon Social Committee urged an investigation by an impartial committee. "We are not unfamiliar with the 'police investigation'," the members of the committee declared, stating their belief that the facts brought out by such an investigation would lead the Governor to "act humanely."

When the governor refused to act and Walter Baer was taken from Portland to New York for deportation, the Social Action Committee of the Oregon Conference continued to work for the cancellation of the deportation order. George J. Clauss, chairman of the Committee, in addressing Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor wrote:

"Many of us, prejudiced against Baer because of our disposition to trust certain State and Federal authorities, have been difficult to enlist in his behalf. We now deplore our lethargy. The facts are compelling and convincing. We implore you to call an impartial investigation."

On January 24, 1936, the day Walter Baer was to have been deported, a writ of *habeas corpus* was granted, making it possible to continue the struggle for his release. Two weeks later the writ was dismissed by Judge Patterson. An appeal is now being taken to the Circuit Court of Appeals. Meanwhile persistence counts. There is still hope that Walter Baer may be returned to his home and family in Portland.

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Summer Peace Institutes

The Council for Social Action cooperates with the American Friends Service Committee in nine summer institutes on international relations. These institutes make a distinguished faculty available to certain areas, and offer opportunity for sound training in education for peace. We heartily commend these

institutes, and hope that our churches will try to send at least one of their men, women, or young people. The total cost for ten days' board, lodging, and tuition is generally \$25.00.

Write the Council for further information about the institutes at:

Durham, North Carolina

Newton, Kansas

Grinnell, Iowa

Evanston, Illinois

Oakland, California

Whittier, California

Portland, Oregon

Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

Wellesley, Massachusetts

A Political Platform For Peace

The Peace Plebiscite created widespread interest in the issue of war and peace. It led to a great deal of thinking about the economic and political policies which lie at the root of war. Now people are asking, "What can I do? What comes next?"

A sound next step is a project now offered by the various peace agencies, including the Council for Social Action, who cooperate in the National Peace Conference. A flier explaining the proposal has been sent to every minister.

Briefly summarized, the project calls for the bringing together of a group of individual citizens who, after mature discussion, will write the peace planks they would wish to place in the platforms of the political parties. Ample material for such discussion is available in the packet prepared by the National Peace Conference (50c.). When the peace planks (policy in the Far East, armaments, etc.) are written, each group is urged to communicate with delegates to the various political conventions, and to make their findings public through local newspapers. In this way it is hoped to make clear the close relationship between peace sentiment and political action.

The Council asks the churches to plan for this project sometime during late April or early May. We shall be glad to receive reports of what you have done.

Helps For The Social Action Committee

Few Essential Books:

- Social Salvation*, by John Bennett. Scribners, 1935, \$2.00.
The Church and Society, by F. Ernest Johnson. Abingdon, 1935, \$1.50.
Our Economic Morality, by Harry F. Ward. Macmillan, 1929, \$2.50.
 (\$1.00 if ordered through the Methodist Federation for Social Service, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York)
Christian Faith and Economic Change, by Halford E. Luccock. Abingdon, 1936, \$2.00.

Organizing for Social Action:

- Churches in Social Action: Why and How?* by James Myers. 1935, 10c.
Action to Match Our Gospel. Free six-page leaflet.

Planning Programs:

- Prayers for Self and Society*, by James Myers. 1934, 15c.
Prayers of Social Awakening, by Walter Rauschenbusch. Pilgrim, 15c.
What Part Should the Church Play in Social Change? Free four-page leaflet.

Social Action Pamphlets: (10c. each; special rates on quantities)

- The Constitution and Social Issues*, by Charles A. Beard.
Liquor Control, By Benson Y. Landis.
Will the Church Demand Racial Justice? by Hubert C. Herring and others.
Profits and the Profit System, by Paul H. Douglas.
Facts About Farming, by Arthur E. Holt and others.
The Church and Cooperatives, by Benson Y. Landis.

Study Packets:

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| <i>Cooperatives</i> —25c. | <i>Militarism in Education</i> —25c. |
| <i>Neutrality</i> —25c. | <i>Child Labor</i> —25c. |
| <i>Civil Liberties</i> —35c. | <i>Social Security</i> —25c. |
| <i>Liquor Control</i> —25c. | <i>Women in Industry</i> —25c. |

(Each packet contains a study outline for four sessions, a reading-list, adequate source material, and copies of pending bills.)

SOCIAL ACTION

SERVICE to humanity
O ur efforts shall succeed
C arry on for liberty
I n this hour of need
A lways for the CAUSE we'll fight
L ord of Hosts, guide us right

A s once again we lead the way
C arrying our banners high
T he hopes and prayers of yesterday
I n our hearts aloud shall cry
O nward forever, 'till peace we find
N ever halting, to save mankind.

The above was written on his own initiative by Erwin Marks, one of the linotype operators in the New York shop where *Social Action* is printed. He is a World War veteran and has become interested in the social action program through the articles that are given him to set up in type for the readers of *Social Action*.